





Meet the Blue Kododo



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Episcopal Church says it won't help resettle white South Africans granted refugee status in U.S.

By **PETER SMITH**
Associated Press

The Episcopal Church's migration service is refusing a directive from the federal government to help resettle white South Africans granted refugee status, citing the church's longstanding "commitment to racial justice and reconciliation." Presiding Bishop Sean Rowe announced the step Monday, shortly before 49 South Africans arrived at Dulles International Airport outside Washington on a private charter plane and were greeted by a government delegation.

Episcopal Migration Ministries instead will halt its decades-long partnership with the government, Rowe said.

President Donald Trump opened a fast-tracked refugee status to white South Africans, accusing their government of discrimination, even as his administration abruptly shut down the overall U.S. refugee program. The South Africans jumped ahead of thousands of would-be refugees overseas who had been undergoing years of vetting and processing. Episcopal Migration Ministries has long resettled refugees under federal grants. Rowe said that about two weeks ago, the government contacted it and said it expected the ministry to resettle some of the South Africans under terms of its grant.



White South Africans demonstrate in support of U.S. President Donald Trump in front of the U.S. embassy in Pretoria, South Africa, Saturday, Feb. 15, 2025.

"In light of our church's steadfast commitment to racial justice and reconciliation and our historic ties with the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, we are not able to take this step," Rowe said. "Accordingly, we have determined that, by the end of the federal fiscal year, we will conclude our refugee resettlement grant agreements with the U.S. federal government." Another faith-based group, Church World Service, said it is open to helping resettle the Afrikaners. South Africa's government has vehemently denied allegations of discriminatory treatment of its white mi-

nority residents.

"It has been painful to watch one group of refugees, selected in a highly unusual manner, receive preferential treatment over many others who have been waiting in refugee camps or dangerous conditions for years," Rowe said. "I am saddened and ashamed that many of the refugees who are being denied entrance to the United States are brave people who worked alongside our military in Iraq and Afghanistan and now face danger at home because of their service to our country." He also said many refugees, including Christians,

are victims of religious persecution and are now denied entry.

He said the church would find other ways to serve immigrants, such as those already in this country and those stranded overseas. The move marks the end of a ministry-government partnership that, for nearly four decades, has served nearly 110,000 refugees from countries, including Ukraine, Myanmar and Congo, Rowe said. It's not the first high-profile friction between the Episcopal Church and the Trump administration. Bishop Mariann Budde of Washington drew Trump's

anger in January at an inaugural prayer service in which she urged "mercy" on those fearing his actions, including migrants and LGBTQ+ children.

The Anglican Church of Southern Africa includes churches in South Africa and neighboring countries. It was a potent force in the campaign against apartheid in the 1980s and 1990s, an effort for which the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984.

Another faith-based refugee agency, Church World Service, says it is open to serving the South African arrivals.

"We are concerned that the U.S. Government has chosen to fast-track the admission of Afrikaners, while actively fighting court orders to provide life-saving resettlement to other refugee populations who are in desperate need of resettlement," Rick Santos, CWS president and CEO, said in a statement.

He added that the action proves the government knows how to screen and process refugees quickly. "Despite the Administration's actions, CWS remains committed to serving all eligible refugee populations seeking safety in the United States, including Afrikaners who are eligible for services," he said. "Our faith compels us to serve each person in our care with dignity and compassion." □

Associated Press

Civil rights agency moves to fire judge fighting Trump directives

By **CLAIRE SAVAGE**
Associated Press

The federal agency tasked with protecting workers' civil rights has moved to terminate a New York administrative judge who has resisted compliance with directives from the White House, including President Donald Trump's executive order decreeing male and female as two "immutable" sexes.

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in response to Trump's order has moved to drop at least seven of its own pending cases representing transgender workers alleging discrimination, and is classifying all new gender identity-related discrimination cases as its lowest priority, signaling a major departure from

its prior interpretation of civil rights law.

EEOC Administrative Judge Karen Ortiz, who in February criticized the agency's Trump-appointed head, Acting Chair Andrea Lucas, in an email copied to more than 1,000 colleagues, on Wednesday was placed on administrative leave. She also received notice that the EEOC leadership sought to fire her, accusing her of "profoundly unprofessional" conduct.

"Of particular concern, your February email was ultimately circulated to multiple press outlets, potentially resulting in significant reputational harm to the agency," according to the notice, which included a PDF of a March 10 article by The Associated Press on Ortiz along with other materials. □



Karen Ortiz, an administrative judge at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, poses for photos, Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2025, in New York.

Associated Press

House Republicans unveil Medicaid cuts that Democrats warn will leave millions without care

By LISA MASCARO
AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans have unveiled the cost-saving centerpiece of President Donald Trump's "big, beautiful bill," at least \$880 billion in cuts largely to Medicaid to help cover the cost of \$4.5 trillion in tax breaks.

Tallying hundreds of pages, the legislation revealed late Sunday is touching off the biggest political fight over health care since Republicans tried but failed to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, during Trump's first term in 2017.

While Republicans insist they are simply rooting out "waste, fraud and abuse" to generate savings with new work and eligibility requirements, Democrats warn that millions of Americans will lose coverage.

A preliminary estimate from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said the proposals would reduce the number of people with health care by 8.6 million over the decade.

"Savings like these allow us to use this bill to renew the Trump tax cuts and keep Republicans' promise to hardworking middle-class families," said Rep. Brett Guthrie of Kentucky,



Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, R-La., speaks during a news conference at the Capitol, Tuesday, May 6, 2025, in Washington.

the GOP chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, which handles health care spending.

But Democrats said the cuts are "shameful" and essentially amount to another attempt to repeal Obamacare.

"In no uncertain terms, millions of Americans will lose their health care coverage," said Rep. Frank Pallone of New Jersey, the top Democrat on the panel. He said "hospitals will close, seniors will not be able to access the care they need, and premiums will rise for

millions of people if this bill passes."

As Republicans race toward House Speaker Mike Johnson's Memorial Day deadline to pass Trump's big bill of tax breaks and spending cuts, they are preparing to flood the zone with round-the-clock public hearings this week on various sections before they are stitched together in what will become a massive package.

The politics ahead are uncertain. More than a dozen House Republicans have told Johnson and

GOP leaders they will not support cuts to the health care safety net programs that residents back home depend on. Trump himself has shied away from a repeat of his first term, vowing there will be no cuts to Medicaid.

One Republican, Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri, warned his colleagues in an op-ed Monday that cutting health care to pay for tax breaks would be "morally wrong and politically suicidal."

All told, 11 committees in the House have been compiling their sections of the

package as Republicans seek at least \$1.5 trillion in savings to help cover the cost of preserving the 2017 tax breaks, which were approved during Trump's first term and are expiring at the end of the year.

But the powerful Energy and Commerce Committee has been among the most watched. The committee was instructed to come up with \$880 billion in savings and reached that goal, primarily with the health care cuts, but also by rolling back Biden-era green energy programs. The preliminary CBO analysis said the committee's proposals would reduce the deficit by \$912 billion over the decade with at least \$715 billion coming from the health provisions.

Central to the savings are changes to Medicaid, which provides almost free health care to more than 70 million Americans, and the Affordable Care Act, which has expanded in the 15 years since it was first approved to cover millions more.

To be eligible for Medicaid, there would be new "community engagement requirements" of at least 80 hours per month of work, education or service for able-bodied adults without dependents. □

Associated Press

U.S. health officials advise older travelers not to get a chikungunya vaccine

By MIKE STOBBE
AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. government advised American travelers age 60 and older not get a chikungunya vaccine as it investigates possible side effects.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration posted notices late last week on the vaccine, Valneva's Ixchiq.

Chikungunya, spread by the bites of infected mosquitoes, is a debilitating tropical illness marked by fever and joint pain. About 100 to 200 cases are reported annually among U.S. travelers.

Last year, the government began recommending the vaccine, which is made with weakened chikungunya virus, to U.S. adults who travel to countries where chi-

kungunya is a problem. But last month, a panel of vaccine experts who advise the CDC heard about an investigation into six people 65 and older most of them with other medical problems who became ill with heart or brain symptoms less than a week after vaccination. More than 10 other similar cases have been reported in people from other countries.

European regulators are also looking into the issue. The U.S. advisers voted to issue a precaution for people 65 and older about getting the vaccine.

They also recommended that a second chikungunya vaccine Bavarian Nordic's Vimkunya be made available for people age 12 and older who are traveling to countries where outbreaks of the mosquito-borne illness are occurring. □



A patient infected with chikungunya looks out from mosquito netting at the Clinicas Hospital in San Lorenzo, Paraguay, Friday, March 3, 2023.

Associated Press

Gov. Gavin Newsom urges California cities and counties to ban homeless encampments

By JANIE HAR
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Gov. Gavin Newsom on Monday urged California cities to clear homeless encampments, escalating once again his efforts to address an intractable issue of his time in office: the makeshift tent camps that line underpasses, parks and local streets up and down the state.

Newsom's administration drafted a local law that counties, cities and towns can directly adopt or modify to achieve the Democratic governor's goals. He's also releasing \$3.3 billion in voter-approved funds to expand housing and treatment options for homeless residents.

"The time for inaction is over. There are no more excuses," Newsom said in a statement.

Newsom, a former mayor of San Francisco, made tackling homelessness a priority of his administration when he took office in 2019 and since then, Democratic leaders in the state have moved toward cracking down on encampments. The state accounts for nearly a third of the homeless population



A man walks past a homeless encampment in downtown Los Angeles, Oct. 25, 2023.

Associated Press

in the United States. More than 187,000 Californians are in need of housing.

With tents lining streets and disrupting businesses in cities and towns across the state, homelessness has become one of the most pressing public health and safety issues in California and one sure to dog Newsom if he runs for national office.

His declaration comes a year after the U.S. Supreme

Court made it easier for officials to ban homeless people from camping outside. It was a ruling welcomed by many Democratic leaders, including Newsom, despite pushback from homeless people and their advocates that the decision by the conservative court was cruel. The key provisions of the model ordinance announced Monday include prohibitions on "persistent camping" in one location,

a ban on encampments that block sidewalks and a requirement that local officials provide notice and make every reasonable effort to identify and offer shelter prior to clearing an encampment. Providing a ready-made local law could bring uniformity to how cities and counties deal with encampments though Newsom is urging local officials to modify his proposal as needed.

Major cities like Los Angeles and San Francisco have already started clearing out encampments, saying they are not fair to children, seniors and disabled people who need access to parks and sidewalks.

San Francisco's new mayor, Daniel Lurie, pledged to clean up city sidewalks while in San José, Mayor Matt Mahan has proposed arrests if a person refuses shelter three times.

In 2024, voters approved a measure that imposes strict requirements on counties to spend on housing and drug treatment programs to tackle the homelessness crisis. It was a signature proposal for Newsom, who campaigned for the measure's passage.

Under the measure, counties are required to spend about two-thirds of the money from a voter-approved tax enacted in 2004 on millionaires for mental health services on housing and programs for homeless people with serious mental illnesses or substance abuse problems.

The governor has also pushed for laws that make it easier to force people with behavioral health issues into treatment. □

Georgia become second US state to shield maker of Roundup weed killer from some cancer claims

By DAVID A. LIEB
Associated Press

In a victory for global agrochemical maker Bayer, Georgia has become the second state to shield pesticide manufacturers from some lawsuits claiming that they failed to warn customers of potential dangers.

The legislation signed Friday by Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp is designed to protect Bayer from lawsuits claiming that it failed to tell customers that its popular weed killer Roundup could cause cancer. It's written broadly enough to provide legal protection in Georgia to any pesticide manufacturer that follows federal labeling requirements.

North Dakota's governor

signed the first such law last month, and similar measures have been considered this year in at least nine other states.

Bayer, based in Germany, acquired Roundup with the 2018 purchase of St. Louis-

based Monsanto. But it quickly was hit with an onslaught of lawsuits alleging that Roundup's key ingredient, glyphosate, causes non-Hodgkin lymphoma. More than 67,000 of a total 181,000 claims involving

Roundup remain outstanding, but a Bayer spokesperson said Monday that he didn't have specifics about how many of those are in Georgia.

Though some studies associate glyphosate with cancer, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has said it is not likely to be carcinogenic to humans when used as directed.

Bayer insists glyphosate is safe. But it has stopped using the ingredient in its residential version of Roundup and has set aside \$16 billion to settle cases. It continues to use glyphosate in its agricultural version of Roundup but has warned that it might have to stop doing so if the legal costs keep

mounting.

The new Georgia law is to take effect Jan. 1. That means it won't effect existing cases, such as a March decision by a Georgia jury to award nearly \$2.1 billion in damages to a man who alleged Roundup caused his cancer.

Bayer has teamed up with a coalition of agricultural industry groups to mount a multiprong campaign. In addition to pursuing legislation in states and Congress, it also has asked the U.S. Supreme Court to intervene and has run ads on billboards, newspapers, TV and radio stations and internet sites touting the importance of glyphosate in agriculture. □



A soybean field is sprayed in Iowa, July 11, 2013.

Associated Press

6 Bulgarians convicted in U.K. of spying for Russia get prison terms up to nearly 11 years

By BRIAN MELLEY

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Six Bulgarians convicted of carrying out a sophisticated spying operation for Russia were sentenced by a London judge Monday to prison terms up to nearly 11 years. The group that used Hollywood code names discussed kidnapping or killing Kremlin opponents as they targeted reporters, diplomats and Ukrainian troops in the U.K., Germany, Austria, Spain and Montenegro between 2020 and 2023, prosecutors said.

No one was physically harmed but the group put lives in jeopardy, prosecutors said.

"It is self-evident that a high price attaches to the safety and interests of this nation," Justice Nicholas Hilliard, said. "The defendants put these things at risk by using this country as a base from which to plan the various operations. ... Anyone who uses this country in that way, in the circumstances of this case, commits a very serious offense."

Ringleader Orlin Roussev, who operated out of a former guesthouse in the English seaside resort town of Great Yarmouth, was given the stiffest sentence 10 years and 8 months in prison for being involved in all six operations discov-



This undated file handout photo issued by the Metropolitan Police shows Orlin Roussev who has been sentenced to 10 years and eight months in prison at the Old Bailey.

Associated Press

ered by police. He and the others faced up to 14 years behind bars.

Roussev worked for alleged Russian agent Jan Marsalek, an Austrian national who is wanted by Interpol for fraud and embezzlement after the 2020 collapse of German payment processing firm Wirecard, prosecutors said. His whereabouts are unknown.

Stiff sentences send a message

Security Minister Dan Jarvis said the case sends a warning to other foes that Britain will use its "full range

of tools" to "detect, disrupt, and deter malicious acts from hostile states and protect the public."

Roussev, 47, and his lieutenant Biser Dzhambazov, 44, pleaded guilty in London's Central Criminal Court last year to espionage charges and having false identity documents. Dzhambazov was sentenced to 10 years and 2 months in prison.

Roussev called himself Jackie Chan and Dzhambazov was dubbed Mad Max, or Jean-Claude Van Damme. Their underlings were dubbed "Minions"

from the animated "Despicable Me" franchise.

Police said their fanciful pseudonyms masked a deadly serious gang.

In one operation, members tried to lure a journalist who uncovered Moscow's involvement in the 2018 Novichok poisoning of a former Russian spy in Salisbury, England, into a "honeypot" romance with another member of the group, Vanya Gaberova.

The spies followed Christo Grozev, a Bulgarian researcher for the online publication Bellingcat,

from Vienna to a conference in Valencia, Spain, and the gang's ringleaders discussed robbing and killing him, or kidnapping him and taking him to Russia.

"Learning only in retrospect that foreign agents have been monitoring my movements, communications and home, surveying my loved ones over an extended period has been terrifying, disorientating and deeply destabilizing," Grozev said in a statement read during the four-day sentencing hearing. "The consequences have not faded with time they have fundamentally changed how I live my daily life and how I relate to the world around me."

Ringleader claimed he was 'no James Bond'

In another operation, members of the group conducted surveillance on a U.S. air base in Germany where they believed Ukrainian troops were training. After police raided his house and arrested Roussev, he denied doing anything on behalf of any government.

"I would be thrilled to see how on God's earth there is a connection between me and Russia or any other state because I haven't been a spy or government agent," Roussev said in a police interview. □

U.K. police investigate overnight fire at Prime Minister Keir Starmer's house in London

LONDON (AP) — British police on Monday were investigating an overnight fire at the London house where Prime Minister Keir Starmer lived before he was elected to lead the country.

Since taking office in July, Starmer has lived in the prime minister's official Downing Street residence, renting out the family home in the Kentish Town neighborhood. London's Metropolitan Police force said that counterterrorism officers were involved in the investigation.

Firefighters were called to "a small fire" just after 1 a.m. (0000 GMT or 8 p.m. EDT), the city's fire department said. Two engines responded, and the blaze was out within a half-hour.

Police said that officers who responded to

the scene found damage "to the property's entrance," but that nobody was hurt. "The fire is being investigated and cordons remain in place while enquiries continue," the police force said.

A cordon of police tape was visible outside the house on Monday.

Starmer's house has attracted protesters in the past. Last year, three pro-Palestinian activists were arrested and charged with public order offenses after unfurling a banner covered in red handprints outside the building.

Starmer's spokesman, Dave Pares, said that "the prime minister thanks the emergency services for their work."

He said the fire "is subject to a live investigation, so I can't comment any further." □



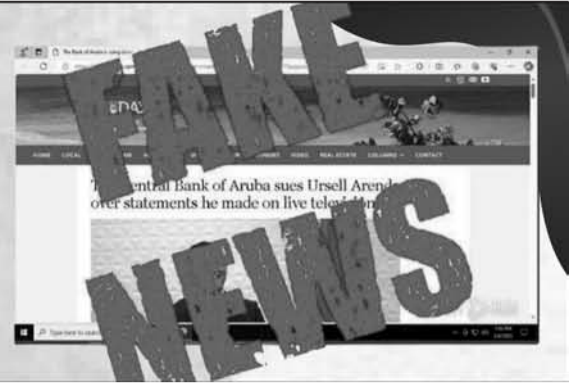
Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer speaks during a press conference, ahead of the publication of the government's Immigration White Paper, in London, Monday, May 12, 2025.

Associated Press

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An airstrike in central Myanmar kills up to 22 people at a bombed school, reports say

By GRANT PECK
Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — An airstrike by Myanmar's military on a village in the country's central Sagaing region hit a school on Monday, killing as many as 20 students and two teachers, according to a member of a resistance group, an aid worker and media reports.

The morning attack on Ohe Htein Twin village in the region's Tabayin township, also known as Depayin, also wounded dozens of students, they said.

State-run MRTV television denied the reports of the airstrike on Monday evening's news broadcast, saying subversive media outlets were intentionally spreading fake news.

The military has increasingly used airstrikes to counter a widespread armed struggle against its rule, which began in February 2021 when it seized power from the elected government



Footwear lie with scattered debris on the ground of a high school after it was allegedly hit by a military airstrike in Ohe Htein Twin village in Tabayin township, also known as Depayin in Sagaing region, Myanmar, May 12, 2025.

Associated Press

of Aung San Suu Kyi. More than 6,600 civilians are estimated to have been killed

by security forces since then, according to figures compiled by nongovern-

mental organizations.

A member of the White Depayin People's Defence

Force resistance group fighting against army rule told The Associated Press that a fighter jet dropped a bomb directly onto a school, where many students from primary to high school levels were studying after 9 a.m. The area is about 115 kilometers (70 miles) northwest of Mandalay, Myanmar's second-largest city. The resistance fighter, who rushed to the site of the attack to help the victims, spoke on condition of anonymity because he was afraid of being arrested by the military. He said that 20 students and two teachers were killed in the attack on the school, which is operated by the country's pro-democracy movement, and about 50 others were wounded. Three nearby houses were damaged. He also said that there had been no recent fighting in the area, though Sagaing is a stronghold of the resistance. □

Cyprus says Syria will take back citizens trying to reach the Mediterranean island by boat



Migrants stand behind a fence inside a refugee camp in Kokkinotrimithia outside of capital Nicosia, Cyprus, on Friday, Feb. 5, 2021.

Associated Press

By MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS
Associated Press

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — Syria has agreed to take back any of its citizens intercepted trying to reach Cyprus by boat, the Mediterranean island nation's deputy minister for migration said Monday. Nicholas Ioannides says two inflatable boats, each carrying 30 Syrians, were already turned back in recent days in line with a bilateral search and rescue agreement that Cyprus and Syria now have in place.

Officials didn't share further details about the agreement.

Cypriot navy and police patrol boats intercepted the two vessels on May 9th and 10th after they put out a call for help. They were outside Cypriot territorial waters but within the island's search and rescue area of responsibility, a government statement

said. They were subsequently escorted back to a port in the Syrian city of Tartus. Ioannides told private TV station Antenna there's been an uptick of boatloads of migrants trying to reach Cyprus from Syria, unlike in recent years when vessels would primarily depart from Lebanon. Cyprus and Lebanon have a long-standing agreement to send back migrants. He said Cypriot authorities and their Syrian counterparts are trying to fight back against human traffickers who are supplying an underground market for laborers. According to Ioannides, traffickers apparently cut deals with local employers to bring in Syrian laborers who pick up work right away, despite laws that prevent asylum-seekers from working before the completion of a nine-month residency period. □

Aruban legends: Frenchman's Pass

(Oranjestad)—If you ever plan on taking a group tour of the island, you may pass through the Frenchman's Pass in Balashi. The Frenchman's pass (known to locals as "Franse Pas") remains a mysterious—and spooky—road of which its legend is told from generation to generation.

The history of the Frenchman's pass—and how it got its name—dates back to the colonization era, when the French tried to colonize the island, but were met with an angry mob of indigenous settlers, refusing to give up their land. However, as the French were heavily equipped with fire arms, the indigenous settlers began to retreat, and hid away in nearby caves. The French colonizers tried to smoke them out of the caves, but the indigenous settlers ended up inhaling too much smoke and most died in those caves. From then on, this passage was known as Frenchman's

Pass, and there have been many accounts of spirits roaming the area of Spanish Lagoon.

There are many ghost stories surrounding this area, but one of the most famous one involves a lonely hitchhiker, trying to find a ride back home in the dark rainy night.

Sometime after trying to hitchhike, the man saw a car approaching, appearing almost ghost-like in the rain. However, since he needed a ride real bad, he didn't think twice and jumped in. But to his horror, he noticed that there was no driver in the front. Paralyzed with fear, he didn't dare to get out, and the car started to move.

When approaching a sharp turn, the hitch hiker braced for impact, but just when he thought the car might drive straight off the road and crash, he saw a hand appear out the win-



dow and turn the wheel. For the next few turns, the hand appeared again. After having had enough, the man decided to jump out and he ran to Santa Cruz.

Arriving at a nearby bar, he ordered a drink and began to tell everyone about his experience. Everyone grew quiet, because they realized he wasn't some

drunk messing around; he was telling the truth.

Sometime later, two men walked into the bar and one of them noticed the hitchhiker. He called out to his buddy and said: "Look, there's the idiot who sat in our car when we were pushing it!"

French man's pass is one

of the few sites on the island that keeps the locals on their toes. While most ghost stories may not have real grounds—or some may even be a set up story for a joke, this pass contributes a lot to our culture of folkloric story-telling. □

Source: visitaruba.com

A guide for the perfect picture

Where to find the most Instagrammable places in Oranjestad

(Oranjestad)—Imagine, you're taking a stroll in the city center, and you want to take the most picture-perfect photo to show your friends and family back home and online. It seems like the perfect spot can be hard to find, but Oranjestad is full of great spots for a quick snapshot! Here are the most Instagrammable places in Oranjestad.

"I LOVE ARUBA"

Right on Paardenbaai Plaza, near the harbor entrance,



you will spot a giant sign that reads "I LOVE ARUBA". A great first stop for a quick shot with the family, this spot is among the few that has become a favorite among tourists, especially those that are visiting Aruba through a cruise vacation.

Speaking of giant signs that read "Aruba" (because there can never be too many), there is another sign you can find along the Linear Park, in front of Talk of the

Town Hotel. It may be a long walk from the harbor to get there, but while you're at it, check out these other spots along the way!

The sitting bull

Yes, you read that right; right in the heart of the city center, in front of the Crystal Casino in the Renaissance Mall, there is a black bull sitting on a bench, waiting for you to take a picture with it. Ok, so it's not a real bull, but "I took a picture with a sitting bull" sounds like a great conversation opener.

See if you can also spot the cow on the roof!

Wooden Swing on Plaza Daniel Leo

While you're in front of the Renaissance Mall, check out the wooden swing on the other side of the mall on Plaza Daniel Leo. Another favorite among visitors wanting a cute snapshot for Insta-



gram. Just pass through the Renaissance Mall and find this gem in front of the back entrance!

Since you've made it this far, one question: How many blue horses have you spotted already?

Renaissance Dock

Last but certainly not least, the Renaissance Dock is the perfect spot to take a

beautiful picture, especially at sunset. The dock is located behind the Renaissance Market Place, and runs from the Renaissance Marina up to Renaissance Beach and Wilhelmina Park. This spot offers a gorgeous view of the ocean and sunset, accompanied by the soft waves crashing on the shoreline. You may even spot some iguanas! □



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Po-Ké Ono Brings Bold Asian Fusion to Aruba's Dining Scene

Innovative eatery blends island culture with modern Asian cuisine



In a culinary landscape known for its diversity and creativity, Po-Ké Ono stands out as a vibrant and contemporary addition to Aruba's restaurant scene. With locations at Azure in Palm Beach and the Renaissance Marketplace in Oranjestad, the concept introduces a refreshing take on Asian fusion dining—casual in style, yet refined in execution.

Established in 2020, Po-Ké Ono was envisioned as a space where flavor, culture, and creativity intersect. The menu features an array of signature dishes including poke bowls, steamed bao, and sushi, crafted with precision and a focus on freshness. Drawing on Asian influences, the restaurant delivers bold flavors in an approachable format, appealing to a broad audience of locals and visitors alike.

The ambiance is designed to be welcoming and relaxed, with a philosophy centered

around accessibility and enjoyment. Whether dining indoors or grabbing a quick bowl on the go, guests can expect a consistently high standard in both service and cuisine. With extensive menu options, including selections for vegan diners, Po-Ké Ono caters to a wide range of tastes and dietary preferences.

While the concept leans into fast-casual dining, the quality of ingredients and thoughtful



preparation reflect fine-dining roots. Many of the restaurant's core ingredients are sourced locally, emphasizing sustainability and support for Aruba's agricultural community. The result is a dining experience that honors both the island's spirit and the culinary traditions it draws inspiration from.

Open daily from 11:00 AM to 10:00 PM, Po-Ké Ono continues to gain recognition as one of the island's premier destinations for sushi, poke, and

bao. Its growing popularity is a testament to Aruba's evolving food culture—one that embraces global influence while staying rooted in community and craft.

For those seeking a modern taste of Asia in the heart of the Caribbean, Po-Ké Ono offers a flavorful and memorable experience worth exploring. □



Aruba to me

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Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a lovely message from Brad Burlew from Louisville, Kentucky, USA.

He wrote to us saying: "Aruba to me is a slice of paradise."

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! □

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Juan Valdez Café | Hungry Piranha - Pizza, Wings & More
The Brownstone Ribs and Seafood | The Market
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Magnet Perfume Jewelry & Cosmetics | The Lazy Lizard
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Surf's Up: Favorite places to catch waves in Aruba



ORANJESTAD – Whether you are a salt-seasoned surfer looking for a thrill, or just looking to wet your toes in a little ocean adventure, Aruba has amazing places to learn and practice surfing! Although more known for the calmer waters of Palm Beach, Eagle Beach and Mangel Halto, Aruba also has some special places to thrill your senses.

Because of strong winds and breezes, Aruba is perfect for wind and kite surfing. You will surely notice

kites in the air as you drive around the wilder, rougher areas on Aruba's east side.

There are plenty of surf shop rentals to help you with your gear, and there are also a lot of tutors if you're looking to try for the first time and need a little help. These can be found around the island, and will surely come in hand if you're wanting to try a new experience!

With that said, here are Aruba's favorite surf spots!

Andicuri

Andicuri is recognized as the best place for body boarding. Because of the rough waves, this beach is better suited for those with more experience in surfing. However, the beach with two bluffs – one on each side – is worth a visit, if only to watch the exciting show presented by the surfers.

To go to Andicuri, you will need a 4x4 vehicle and drive from the ex-Natural Bridge Center. Alternatively, you can make it an adventure by going on a hike! The scenery is unique and beautiful on its own.

Reaching Andicuri Beach can be an adventure in itself, as it can be difficult to find and is only accessible by 4x4 vehicle or walking from the ex-Natural Bridge center, but the impressive scenery makes it all worthwhile!

Arashi

Arashi, a beach located close to the California Light-house, is a good spot for learning and having fun – if you're lucky! The waves at Arashi are usually calm, but with just the right weather, a swell forms attracting all the local surfers to the area.

Boca Grandi

Boca Grandi is at the most southern spot in Aruba, and is a popular spot with experienced surfers. Close to the famous Red Anchor and our beloved Sunrise City – San Nicolas, a trip to Boca Grandi can easily turn into an all-day trip to this area of the island. With a beautiful beach (although it is not allowed to swim here, because of strong currents), you can enjoy a relaxing time combing the beach for driftwood, coral, and little crabs and snails.

Hadicurari

Known locally as Fisherman's Hut, here is where you will find most of the action for surfers in Aruba. With a variety of surf shops and schools in this area, you will find it easy to get in on the action. Hadicurari is also the site of the Aruba Hi Winds World Challenge, which takes place usually in June/July, and it is the largest windsurfing competition in the Caribbean!

Malmok

If you're a beginner, this is your spot. There are also various shops to rent gear and receive lessons, facilitating learning and just trying out a new experience. The beach is also popular for paddleboarding and other watersport activities. □

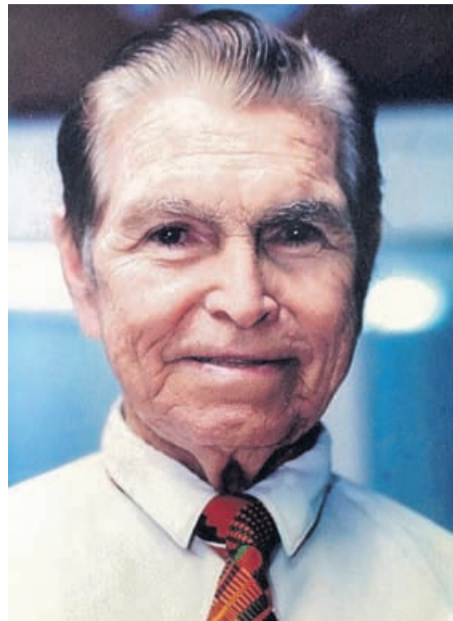
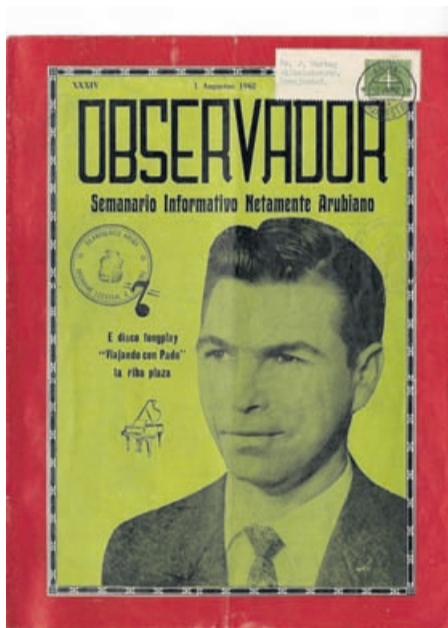


Meet our Aruban trailblazers: Padu Lampe

(Oranjestad)—This week we remember one of our most beloved Aruban giant, Juan Chabaya Lampe—better known as Padu Lampe or Padu del Caribe. As one of the most important and renowned artists in the Aruban cultural sphere, Padu's long career led him to be honored today as "the father of culture."

On April 26th, 1920, Juan Chabaya Lampe "Padu Lampe/Padu del Caribe" was born in Nassaustraat, Oranjestad. He grew up in a happy musical environment, and it is because of this that he developed a love for music. Starting from the age of 12, he was agile in the clarinet, mandolin and cuatro. Henry Lampe, his father, was also a well-known pianist and musician.

In a publication of the informative seminar, "Observer", from august 1st,



1962, Padu's many merits and friendly personality stood out. It was said that he was an excellent pianist with a personal style and full of surprises. Secondly, though the composer was not too familiar with music theory, he showed innovations in his compositions. Lastly, Padu was a promoter of Creole music around the world. One of the most important moments in Aruban history, in which he was able to witness first-hand, was the first radio broadcast on the island on March 20th, 1954. Here, he was accompanied by Antillean guitarist Julian Coco and Hubert "Loi" Booi. In the art world, Padu was also a known painter. During his youth, he made several painting using his unique style. In 1939, he participated in an art exhibit in New York, where he won a bronze medal for his painting "Typical View of Aruba."

Padu remained a popular artist



within the Dutch Antilles and the Caribbean as a pianist, singer, author and painter. Padu Lampe was a local artist who became renowned in Venezuela, Colombia, The U.S. and The Netherlands too. In the 1950s, he sold no less than 50 thousand copies of his long-playing albums (LPs). Padu Lampe was a multifaceted artist, inspired by his interest in parapsychology and supernatural phenomenon. He wrote three books in Papiamentu on the subject in 1986, which was published by the Aruban National Printing Press with sponsorship provided by the Prince Bernhard Funds Netherlands Antilles. Besides that, Padu passed his exam on "Society to Advanced Ethical Hypnosis" in 1964 in New Jersey. He received a certificate as a hypnotechnician, which gave him the authority to practice hypnosis in some states. Over the course of his career, he received many accolades and awards in Aruba, Curacao, Venezuela and the Netherlands.

Padu del Caribe passed away on November 29th, 2019, at the age of 99 years old. Padu brought the Aruban culture around the world. His legacy will remain ingrained in the Aruban cultural history, and he will be known forever as one of the most influential trailblazers of our community.

Padu will always be in Aruba's heart, because he had composed various special songs dedicated to the mothers of the island; his song "Sonrisa di un baby" ("A baby's Smile") has been written in three different languages. Padu also wrote our national anthem "Aruba Dushi Tera", along with Mr. Rufo Wever. This song was approved by the government of Aruba and was named the official anthem of the island in 1976.

Other songs that have been considered as being almost a second anthem for Arubans is the special composition he wrote for his wife Daisy Croes called "Abo so". Daisy later passed away in 1994. □

The different lizards in Aruba Blue Kododo and the Striped Anole

ORANJESTAD – Colorful or camouflaged, you're bound to encounter a variety of lizards basking in the sun or scurrying on their way in our island.

Blue Kododo

These are one of the most striking lizards in Aruba, recognizable by the male's bright blue color. The Aruban whiptail lizard, *Cnemidophorus arubensis*, is a species endemic to Aruba, meaning you can only find it here on our One Happy Island! They are also recognized as the most common and populous lizard on the island. While the male is blue with white dots, the female is brown with blue dots.

These charming lizards eat mostly plants, such as flowers, nectar, leaves and fruits, and occasionally enjoy some insects. They are selective in which plants they eat, because of the toxins present in many available plants species. The Kododo help take care of Aruba's vegetation by playing a significant role in the dispersal of seeds for certain plants: when they eat fruit, they excrete the seeds in diverse locations, contributing to the reproduction cycle of our local plants.

Striped anole

The striped anole (*Anolis lineatus*) that lives in Aruba is known locally as Walfaka or Toteki. This is a species of lizard in the family Dactylo-

dae, and they are native to Aruba and Curaçao. It is usually found in dry areas, commonly where there are not large trees; rather they enjoy rocks, walls or tree trunks, as they prefer to stay close to the ground.

These lizards are about 7cm in length, have a brown color with a stripe on each side and typically, several stripes on the body and tail that are lighter in color. It has a dewlap which is orange-yellow – and what's unique about this species is that it is the only known species of anole where the dewlap is asymmetrically colored, with one side being a deeper orange and the other side a lighter yellow.



Mostly this is seen in the males, as it is almost imperceptible in the females. If the Toteki shows you his dewlap, retreat! This is not a friendly greeting!

Lizards are wonderful creatures that are precious to our fragile, local ecosystem. Please be mindful of these residents as you enjoy your stay. □

Images: Aruba Birdlife Conservation.

A brief history of the California Light House



(Oranjestad)—At the furthest western point of the island, there lies the tallest structure on the island: The California Light House. Standing on top of a limestone cliff, this lighthouse oversees the entire island, offering one of few best views of the island and the surrounding sea. It is also one of the few monuments that hold a rich history.

The lighthouse was constructed in between 1914-1916, and its first keeper was a young trained lighthouse keeper from Curaçao names Jacob Jacobs. Mr. Frederico Fingal was the last man to have occupied this position until 1962. Though his son, Mr. Romulo Fingal did not continue in his father's footsteps, he does have a special connection to the lighthouse. He sat down with our reporter and shared a bit of its history.

As Mr. Fingal explains, "In

1915, cargo donkeys were hired from Figaroa di Noord to help build the Lighthouse at Westpunt. The donkeys had to walk along the beach all the way to Westpunt carrying the cargo, poles, cement, and all these things. At that time, it was a difficult task until Aruba got its first truck. These things reflect how people could have accomplished this tremendous job with so little." Mr. Fingal said, "At that time, it wasn't a place for people to work. It was very challenging because it was full of goats and donkeys, and it was very isolated. There were no hotels or roads to get there. There was only a donkey trail. Those were the only means of transportation."

Mr. Fingal continues, "In 1939, I was born in the lighthouse, and my father was the last lighthouse keeper until he retired in 1962. After that, they removed the power cables all the way

to the top. According to the story, we couldn't have the light ourselves because they dismantled it, and after many years, I heard that it is in a train museum in San Nicolas, where we found this very special lens that, when the light shines through it, it reaches 30 kilometers out to sea." Mr. Fingal told our reporter.

The lighthouse has a long and very interesting history. The reason why the lighthouse was built, according to Mr. Fingal, dates back to the day when the cargo ship S.S. California sank because of the lack of light. In 1913, Aruba made a request to Curaçao to build a Lighthouse at Westpunt, and the governor of Curaçao responded to Aruba to come back in 1915 with a well-detailed plan. "During the First World War from 1914 to 1918, they had to wait for the light to be transported to Aruba because it was manufactured in



France. At that time, there was no electricity, and the light was very interesting because it rotated with a kerosene lamp that planes used; clean kerosene," Mr. Fingal said.

Mr. Fingal discovered something very interesting about the lighthouse after much research was documented in his book 'History of the Lighthouse at Westpunt.' He found many details: "I found out that the height of the lighthouse was due to the absence of electricity. There was also the presence of coral. There is a long steel cable from where the light is, and under the light, at the highest point, there is a hanging weight, a sort of pendulum that swings like that, with a weight that measures about 1 meter by 30 centimeters wide, which is a block of solid iron attached to a

cable. When you release it upwards, it comes down, and the weight that comes down pulls it up, gradually. And while it comes down, the same weight that is descending causes many small wheels to turn in the opposite direction. The Lighthouse rotates from 6 pm in the evening, when the sun sets, until 6 am in the morning. During the entire night, the light shines on the lantern, it goes down 24 meters, and the Lighthouse is 30 meters high. It is designed not to collapse," Mr. Fingal explains.

Mr. Fingal further explains that in one night, the lighthouse rotates 4,320 times and consumes one gallon of kerosene for the whole operation. "At that time, the kerosene was supplied from the Lago refinery. Every day it was brought down, and to start the light again, they had to lift the weight up, so our job as children was to crank it and raise the weight back up in the evening when the light stuck, they would take it down again, and the light stayed down. That's how it worked for a very long time," Mr. Fingal explains.

Thanks to the Monument Fund Aruba, which worked hard and is currently in charge of the Lighthouse, Mr. Fingal is very happy with its preservation, along with all the renovations that have taken place. He hopes that the story of the lighthouse will continue to live on for future generations. □



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 42 Oboe

1 Provide parts food for 43 Classes

6 Venomous snake

11 Throw with effort

12 Irritate

13 Military, navy, etc.

15 Diner dessert

16 Corn spike

17 Mine yield

18 Butler or maid

20 Animal abode

21 Golfer Ernie

22 Witty remark

23 Sells for

26 Some statues

27 Aware of

28 Egg layer

29 In the style of

30 Diet unit

34 Stimpy's pal

35 Maximum amount

36 Santa — winds

37 Groups of company vendors

40 Calendar entry

41 Question of place

DOWN

1 Cowboy wear

2 Eagle's home

3 Circus performer

4 Genesis name

5 Gives out new hands

6 Left, on a liner

7 German article

8 Breaks a cipher

9 Himalayan peak

10 Bristles at

14 Stadium group

19 White House power

22 Jupiter's wife

23 More vulgar

24 Taking a sabbatical

25 Spider-Man creator

26 Accordion part

28 Sports period

30 Play groups

31 Indy entrant

32 Like argon

33 Moves cautiously

38 Final part

39 Pi follower

P	R	E	Y	S		A	R	C	S
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O	V	I	N	E		I	N	P	U
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G	R	A	N	D	M	A	S	T	E
			E	A	T		L	O	N
C	A	S	E	D		C	O	L	T
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14 Stadium group 26 Accordion part
19 White House power 28 Sports period
22 Jupiter's wife 30 Play groups
23 More vulgar 31 Indy entrant
24 Taking a sabbatical 32 Like argon
25 Spider-Man creator 33 Moves cautiously
38 Final part
39 Pi follower

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5-16

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

5-16

CRYPTOQUOTE

PYUQ U RQWUJAO QYMJA! QD

KO UZMCO KOJOUQY FYOWWB

KZDRRDHR. — TDKUBURYM

MRRU

Cryptoquote: A SPOKEN WORD IS NOT A SPARROW. ONCE IT FLIES OUT, YOU CAN'T CATCH IT. — RUSSIAN PROVERB

Cruise ship Schedule: May 13 - 20 2025

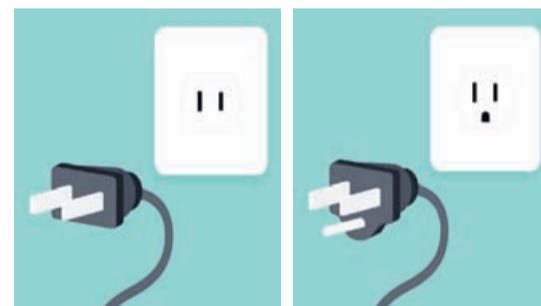
			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
TUE	13	CELEBRITY REFLECTION	08.00	23.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL HORIZON	09.00	23.00	C	1
WED	14	FREEWINDS	06.00	****	E	1
THU	15	CARNIVAL VENEZIA	09.00	22.00	C	1
SUN	18	RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	C	1
		FREEWINDS - Dept.	****	22.30	E	-
TUE	20	ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS	07.00	16.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL VISTA	13.00	23.00	C	1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basicbut important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.



Drinking water

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.



Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.



Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.



From AI avatars to virtual reality crime scenes, courts are grappling with AI in the justice system



Judge Andrew Siegel watches a virtual reality presentation Thursday, Dec. 17, 2024, at the Broward County Courthouse in Fort Lauderdale during a hearing on the admissibility of a virtual reality depiction in a stand-your-ground case.

Associated Press

By RIO YAMAT
Associated Press

Stacey Wales gripped the lectern, choking back tears as she asked the judge to give the man who shot and killed her brother the maximum possible sentence for manslaughter. What appeared next stunned those in the Phoenix courtroom last week: An AI-generated video with a likeness of her brother, Christopher Pelkey, told the shooter he was forgiven. The judge said he loved and appreciated the video, then sentenced the shooter to 10.5 years in prison the maximum sentence and more than what prosecutors sought.

Within hours of the hearing on May 1, the defendant's lawyer filed a notice of appeal.

Defense attorney Jason Lamm won't be handling the appeal, but said a higher court will likely be asked to weigh in on whether the judge improperly relied on the AI-generated video when sentencing his client. Courts across the country have been grappling with how to best handle the increasing presence of artificial intelligence in the courtroom. Even before Pelkey's family used AI to give him a voice for the victim impact portion believed to be a first in U.S. courts the Arizona Supreme Court created a

committee that researches best AI practices.

In Florida, a judge recently donned a virtual reality headset meant to show the point of view of a defendant who said he was acting in self-defense when he waved a loaded gun at wedding guests. The judge rejected his claim.

And in New York, a man without a lawyer used an AI-generated avatar to argue his case in a lawsuit via video. It took only seconds for the judges to realize that the man addressing them from the video screen wasn't real.

Experts say using AI in courtrooms raises legal and ethical concerns, especially if it's used effectively to sway a judge or jury. And they argue it could have a disproportionate impact on marginalized communities facing prosecution. □

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U.S. businesses that rely on Chinese imports express relief and anxiety over tariff pause

By **MAE ANDERSON** and **ANNE D'INNOCENZIO**
AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — American businesses that rely on Chinese goods reacted with muted relief Monday after the U.S. and China agreed to pause their exorbitant tariffs on each other's products for 90 days. Importers still face relatively high tariffs, however, as well as uncertainty over what will happen in the coming weeks and months. Many businesses delayed or canceled orders after President Donald Trump last month put a 145% tariff on items made in China.

Now, they're concerned a mad scramble to get goods onto ships will lead to bottlenecks and increased shipping costs. The temporary truce was announced as retailers and their suppliers are looking to finalize their plans and orders for the holiday shopping season.

"The timing couldn't have been any worse with regard to placing orders, so turning on a dime to pick back up with customers and our factories will put us severely behind schedule," said WS Game Company owner Jonathan Silva, whose Massachusetts business creates deluxe versions of Monopoly, Scrabble and other Hasbro board games.

Silva said the 30% tariff on Chinese imports still is a step in the right direction. He has nine containers of products waiting at factories in China and said he would work to get them exported at the lower rate.

U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said the U.S. agreed to lower its 145% tariff rate on Chinese goods by 115 percentage points, while China agreed to lower its retaliatory 125% rate on U.S. goods by the same amount. The two sides plan to continue negotiations on a longer-term trade deal.

National Retail Federation President and CEO Matthew Shay said the move was a "critical first step to provide some short-term



Shipping containers are seen ready for transport at the Guangzhou Port in the Nansha district in southern China's Guangdong province on Thursday, April 17, 2025.

Associated Press

relief for retailers and other businesses that are in the midst of ordering merchandise for the winter holiday season."

The news sent the stock market and the value of the dollar soaring, a lift that eluded business owners confronting another dizzying shift.

Marc Rosenberg, founder and CEO of The Edge Desk in Deerfield, Illinois, invested millions of dollars to develop a line of \$1,000 ergonomic chairs but delayed production in China that was set to begin this month, hoping for a tariff reprieve. Rosenberg said it was good U.S.-China trade talks were ongoing but that he thinks the 90-day window is "beyond dangerous" since shipping delays could result in his chairs still being en route when the temporary deal ends.

"There needs to be a plan in place that lasts a year or two so people can plan against it," he said.

Jeremy Rice, the co-owner of a Lexington, Kentucky, home-décor shop that specializes in artificial flower arrangements, said the

limited pause makes him unsure how to approach pricing.

About 90% of the flowers House uses are made in China.

He stocked up on inventory and then paused shipments in April.

"Our vendors are still kind of running around juggling, not knowing what they're gonna do," Rice said. "We ordered in what we could pre-tariff and so there's stock here, but we're getting to the point now where there's things that are gone and we're going to have to figure out how we're gonna approach it."

"There's no relief," he added. "It's just kind of like you're just waiting for the next shoe to drop."

Before Trump started the latest U.S. tariff battle with China, Miami-based game company All Things Equal was preparing to launch its first electronic board game. Founder Eric Poses said he spent two years developing "And the Good News Is," a fill-in-the-blank game covering topics like politics and sports.

He plowed \$120,000 into

research and development.

When the president in February added a 20% tariff on products made in China, Poses started removing unessential features such as embossed packaging. When the rate went up to 145%, he faced two options: leave the goods in China or send them to bonded warehouses, a storage method which allows importers to defer duty payments for up to five years.

Poses contacted his factories in China on Monday to arrange the deferred shipments, but with his games still subject to a 30% tariff, he said he would have to cut back on marketing to keep the electronic game priced at \$29.99. With other businesses also in a rush to get their products, he said he is worried he won't be able to his into shipping containers and that if he does, the cost will be much more expensive.

"It's very hard to plan because if you want to go back to production in a couple of months, then you're worried about what

will the tariff rate be when it hits the U.S. ports after that 90-day period," Poses said. Jim Umlauf's business, 4Knines, based in Oklahoma City, makes vehicle seat covers and cargo liners for dog owners and others.

He imports raw materials such as fabric, coatings and components from China.

Umlauf said that even with a lower general tariff rate, it's hard for small businesses to make a profit. He thinks the U.S. government should offer small business exclusions from the tariffs.

"I appreciate any progress being made on the tariff front, but unfortunately, we're still far from a real solution especially for small businesses like mine," Umlauf said. "When tariffs exceed 50%, there's virtually no profit left unless we dramatically raise prices an option that risks alienating customers."

Zou Guoqing, a Chinese exporter who supplies molds and parts to a snow-bike factory in Nebraska as well as fishing and hunting goods to a U.S. retailer in Texas, also thinks the remaining 30% tariff is too high to take comfort in.

With the possibility Washington and Beijing will negotiate over the 20% tariff Trump imposed due to what he described as China's failure to stem the flow of fentanyl, Zou said he would wait until the end of May to decide when to resume shipments to the U.S. Silva, of WS Game Company, said he planned to begin placing his holiday season orders this week but won't be as bold as he might have been if the ultra-high tariff had been suspended for more than 90 day.

"We will order enough to get by and satisfy the demand we know will be there at the increased pricing needed, but until we get a solid foundation of a long-term agreement, the risks are still too high to be aggressive." □

With offseason work mostly complete, here are some of the most improved teams in the NFL

By **JOSH DUBOW**
AP Pro Football Writer

Spring is the time of optimism in the NFL with most teams hopeful that the moves made this offseason will lead to success in the fall.

Since the start of the league year in March, teams have doled out billions of dollars in free agent contracts, drafted 257 players and made scores of trades to upgrade their rosters.

Winning the offseason doesn't guarantee wins in the real season with countless examples of aggressive teams in March and April falling flat in September and October.

But it does provide hope to fans hopeful that their teams can have a turnaround like the one that carried Washington from last place in 2023 to the NFC title game a year later or have added the ingredients to get over the hurdle and win it all like Philadelphia last season.

With most of the major work by teams this offseason mostly complete outside of a potential Aaron Rodgers signing in Pittsburgh here are some of the teams that made the biggest improvements headed into the 2025 season.

Chicago Bears



Chicago Bears new head coach Ben Johnson smiles as he talks to media members after the NFL football team's rookie camp in Lake Forest, Ill., Friday, May 9, 2025.

Associated Press

Chicago was one of the offseason winners last season only to struggle in the regular season as quarterback Caleb Williams struggled at times as a rookie and the defense struggled to close out games, leading to the midseason firing of coach Matt Eberflus.

The Bears were busy again this offseason and might have made the necessary changes to get the most out of Williams. They hired the most sought after coach on the market in bringing in Ben Johnson after a successful run as

offensive coordinator in Detroit. That should help Williams as should the additions of Joe Thuney, Drew Dalman and Jonah Jackson on the interior of the offensive line. Williams also has two new key playmakers in draft picks Colston Loveland at tight end and Luther Burden III at receiver.

Chicago also fortified the defensive front for new coordinator Dennis Allen, adding Grady Jarrett and Dayo Odeyingbo in free agency and drafting Shemar Turner in the second

round.

New England Patriots

Jerod Mayo struggled in his first season as head coach in New England in place of the legendary Bill Belichick, leading the move to hire an established coach in his place with Mike Vrabel taking over the Patriots.

Vrabel made the playoffs three times in six seasons as head coach in Tennessee and should have a big impact on the culture and a defense that added key free agents Milton Williams, Robert Spillane, Carlton Davis and Harold Landry.

But the key to success in 2025 will be the additions made on offense to support second-year QB Drake Maye. Maye showed positive flashes last season despite having one of the worst supporting casts in the league.

The situation is much better this season with the offensive line getting a big upgrade thanks to No. 4 overall pick Will Campbell at left tackle, along with veteran center Garrett Bradbury and right tackle Morgan Moses.

Free agent receivers Stefon Diggs and Mack Hollins, along with rookie Kyle Williams, give Maye more legitimate options on the outside and second-round running back TreVeyon Henderson should make a big impact as both a runner and in the passing game.

Las Vegas Raiders

Perhaps no team made a bigger leap at the key spots of head coach and quarterback like the Raiders.

Proven winner Pete Carroll was hired to replace Antonio Pierce. Carroll added his old quarterback from Seattle with a trade for Geno Smith, who provides a major upgrade over Gardner Minshew and Aidan O'Connell. □

Michael Jordan is joining NBC as a special contributor for its NBA coverage

NEW YORK (AP) — Michael Jordan is joining NBC Sports as a special contributor to its NBA coverage when the 2025-26 season begins.

NBC made the announcement on Monday morning during its upfront presentation at Radio City Music Hall previewing the network's offerings during the upcoming television season.

"I am so excited to see the NBA back on NBC," Jordan said during a video message. "The NBA on NBC was a meaningful part of my career, and I'm excited about being a special contributor to the project. I'm looking forward to seeing you all when the NBA on NBC launches this October." NBC returns to carrying the NBA after a 23-year absence. It had NBA rights from 1990 through 2002 and carried all six of

Jordan's championships as a member of the Chicago Bulls.

This is the first time Jordan has joined a network. His appearances and comments during the 2020 "The Last Dance" documentary about his career and the end of the Bulls dynasty in 1998 created plenty of headlines.

"Michael's legacy both on and off the court speaks for itself," NBC Sports President Rick Cordella said. "We're incredibly proud to have him join our coverage."

NBC's 11-year agreement with the NBA and WNBA begins in October. Peacock will exclusively stream games on Monday night while NBC/Peacock will have regional doubleheaders on Tuesday. NBC and Peacock will also launch "Sunday Night Basketball" in January. □



Michael Jordan, center, and Curtis Polk, left, co-owners of 23XI Racing, watch during qualifying beside 23XI Racing President Steve Lauletta, right, for a NASCAR Cup Series Championship auto race, Nov. 9, 2024, in Avondale, Ariz.

Associated Press

NASCAR star Kyle Larson is ready to focus on the Indianapolis 500 after a sprint car race

By DAVE SKRETTA

AP Sports Writer

KANSAS CITY, Kan. (AP) —

Kyle Larson said he would turn his attention to the Indianapolis 500, and a second crack at racing immortality, the moment he stepped out of his car following the NASCAR Cup Series race at Kansas Speedway on Sunday.

The only problem with that? He wasn't due for practice at Indianapolis Motor Speedway until Tuesday. Plenty of time to squeeze in another race.

So even as Larson was basking in the glow of a third Cup Series win of the season while flying to Indianapolis on Sunday night, he wasn't quite ready to



Kyle Larson, center, celebrates in Victory Lane after winning a NASCAR Cup Series auto race at Kansas Speedway in Kansas City, Kan., Sunday, May 11, 2025.

Associated Press

thing that I've always been impressed with Kyle since he showed up at Hendrick Motorsports is that he is unfazed," Knaus said. "Like, nothing gets under his skin. He doesn't get wound up. He doesn't get emotional about maybe something that happens on the race track. He doesn't get emotional and carry weight on his shoulders.

"He just rolls with it," Knaus said, "and he goes and he continues to drive."

That preternaturally placid demeanor was stretched nearly to a breaking point at last year's Indy 500, though.

Larson was taking his first shot at "the Double," trying to run every lap of the 500 and the Coca-Cola 600 in Charlotte the same day Memorial Day weekend. Many have tried but only Tony Stewart in 1999 has managed to pull it off.

But while Larson was able to overcome every problem lobbed at him on the track aside from a speeding penalty on pit road in the 500 that took him out of contention for the win he was powerless when it came to dealing with the weather. He doesn't like being powerless.

On race day, rain swept through Indianapolis Motor Speedway and soaked the track, leaving Larson to wait in Gasoline Alley to see whether the race would even take place that Sunday. And if it did take place, would he stay and run the 500 or be forced to withdraw so that he could head to Charlotte and fulfill his obligations in the Cup Series race that night?

He stuck around and ran every lap of the Indy 500, and was chosen rookie of the year afterward. But the delay kept him from starting the Coca-Cola 600, and by the time his helicopter-plane-helicopter trip from Indiana to North Carolina had deposited him at the track, more rain in Charlotte kept him from ever climbing into his car there and completing a lap. □

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